

Half a String's Equality and Diversity Policy

Half a String is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in all aspects of its work. Half a String is committed to being an equal opportunities employer. Under The Equality Act 2010, individuals are protected against discrimination on the following grounds: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity. These are now called protected characteristics. The policy is that no individual or group should receive less favourable treatment on any of these grounds, and also adds nationality, culture and class. There will be times when due to casting Half a String may advertise a role for a person that specifically focuses on a protected characteristic. This will depend on the demands of a project and ensure under represented groups are represented as part of our work.

This principle applies to all aspects of employment of staff, including conditions of employment, recruitment, pay, training, promotion and redundancy.

Half a String values people's differences and their present and potential contribution, regardless of membership of any group.

It may be helpful to clarify some of the terms related to equality and diversity.

Direct discrimination

This is defined as treating someone less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

This can occur when there is a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular protected characteristic. An example could be a particular height restriction to work as a police officer which was such that it was likely to exclude a disproportionate number of women.

Discrimination by association

This is where direct discrimination takes place against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. An example would be a person who suffers discrimination on the grounds that they have a disabled child. They are protected in relation to disability discrimination on the basis of their association with a disabled child, although they themselves are not disabled.

Discrimination by perception

This is where direct discrimination takes place against someone because the others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. An example would be where a heterosexual man is harassed on the basis that he is believed to be gay when in fact he is not. He is still protected by

the legislation around sexual orientation even though he himself is not actually gay. The perception that he is, and the resulting harassment, means he is protected.

Principles

1. We want to ensure that every individual, regardless of membership of any group, will have equal access to employment opportunities, training, programmes and services and that no applicant or employee is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be reasonably justified by the needs of the post or the organisation as a whole.
2. We are committed to finding ways of ensuring that Half a String activities and services are accessible to all members of the creative community, and that the whole community benefits from its work.
3. We believe that all people should have access to performing arts and that diversity and equality of opportunity within the art form makes a positive contribution to its artistic health and vitality.

Context

Half a String recognises that the characteristics of the demographics of the professional theatre community have implications for the promotion of equal opportunities in practice.

Half a String is committed to being supportive of, and working with organisations to promote equality of opportunity for audiences, artists, staff and board members alike.

The specific policies, actions and intentions of Half a String are provided on the following pages, specifically relating to:

- Recruitment
- Employment
- Physical environment
- External services and activities
- Imagery and language
- Responsibilities for implementation, monitoring and review

Recruitment

Half a String's policy is to recruit staff in a fair, open and clear manner. The intention is that recruitment decisions are based on the relevant merits and abilities of candidates. All those involved in recruitment decisions are required not to discriminate, whether directly or indirectly.

Principles

- All posts are driven by the organisational needs of Half a String.
- The need for replacing a post is reviewed before starting a new recruitment procedure. Each recruitment procedure is different and needs to be viewed in context.
- All posts must have a job description and person specification.
- All procedures around appointments will be thorough and well monitored.
- Appointments can only be made after assessment and interview.
- Any employee seeking a new or different post will be expected to go through an application and interview process. Internal applicants will be assessed in the same way as external candidates and will only be invited for an interview if they meet the requirements for the job.
- Short term posts [i.e. less than 12 months] may be filled by freelance staff or through limited external advertisement/direct contact.
- Half a String will aim to assess each individual according to their ability to carry out a given job, project or activity. It will not be assumed, for example, that men or women or disabled people are only able to do certain kinds of jobs.
- The main criteria for selecting an individual will be the person's ability to fulfil the role. Selection criteria and procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

Procedures

Half a String has procedures in place to promote good practice in equal opportunities in recruitment. These include:

- Advertising posts as widely as feasible in the context of the specific post
- Using language that is clear, simple, free from bias, and avoiding any implication of preference for one group of applicants and personal questions
- Providing job descriptions and person specifications for all advertised posts, and providing information about the organisation, the context for the post and outline terms and conditions for all enquirers, to enable them to gauge their suitability for the post.
- Person specifications are clear about whether requirements are essential or desirable for the post. Essential requirements are limited to those that are necessary for the safe and effective performance of the post and that cannot be readily met through training.
- Providing application forms, and providing applicants with a range of opportunities to demonstrate their strengths and suitability for the post.
- Short listing in accordance with the requirements of the job description and person specification

- Where possible, asking all interviewees to undertake the same practical tests and answer the same questions, with follow-up questions as appropriate to enable all candidates to demonstrate their strengths whilst being able to make adjustments for disabled candidates where these are suitable and appropriate to the process.
- Providing equal opportunities monitoring forms to enable us to monitor the diversity of applicants.

The intention is that recruitment decisions are based on the relevant merits and abilities of candidates. Selection criteria and procedures are reviewed every time posts become available to ensure they are relevant and effective. All those involved in recruitment decisions are required not to discriminate unfairly, whether directly or indirectly.

Employment

Half a String is committed to being an equal opportunities employer of their full-time and part-time staff, freelancers and board members Half a String welcomes employees from all sections of the community.

It seeks to put this commitment into practice through:

- Providing consistency in conditions of employment, pay, training, promotion opportunities and redundancy for all staff
- Providing detailed policies and procedures in the staff handbook, setting out employees' rights as well as responsibilities. This is located on the shared drive and available to all members of staff at all times.
- Providing a programme of induction and probationary period for all new members of staff
- Providing annual appraisals for all staff, and regular opportunities for one-to-one discussion and supervision sessions with their line manager
- Having a budget for staff training and development, discussing training and development needs with staff and facilitating individual and team training and development opportunities. All staff will be given equal opportunity in their access to training enabling them to progress both within and outside the company. Employees will be expected to attend equal opportunities and diversity training where budgets allow.
- Having clear grievances and disciplinary procedures in place.
- Making it a responsibility of all members of staff to be committed to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Providing an environment that is free of harassment, whether verbal, physical or behavioural.
- Being sensitive to individual circumstances and respecting cultural and religious demands as far as is reasonable within the constraints of the post and the organisation as a whole.

- Half a String will actively seek to eliminate or overcome real or perceived barriers to work, such as physical, economic or emotional, making reasonable adjustments wherever practical. Half a String will also seek to eliminate or overcome any real or perceived attitudinal barriers experienced by any individual in the workplace, in relation to their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, nationality, culture, or class. The intention is that all staff shall be treated fairly and equally, be provided with a supportive working environment and encouraged to fulfil their potential and develop their professional skills, experience and understanding during their period of employment with Half a String.

Access

Half a String is committed to ensuring that all employees are able to work effectively and to the best of their abilities.

Half a String is committed to making adjustments where these are considered to be reasonable within the context of the role and the organisation. Each situation will be considered on an individual basis and the organisation will fully involve the employee in the consideration of adjustments. Some examples of reasonable adjustments we may be able to make are:

- Altering working hours
- Acquiring equipment or modifying existing equipment
- Allowing absences during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment
- Supplying additional training
- Providing additional supervision and / or support
- Making physical adjustments to premises.

If such adjustments are not immediately affordable, Half a String will investigate further funding for adaptations and if possible offer suitable alternative arrangements, agreed with the employee, in the meantime.

External Services and Activities

Half a String aims to make its productions, community activities and services relevant and accessible to the widest possible sector of the general public. It seeks to put this into practice through:

- Emphasising our productions and community activities are accessible to all regardless of where they live, and seeking to provide discount tickets and bursaries for productions, events or workshops where possible for those on low income.

- Ensuring that at all times information about all our work is clear, uses accessible and inclusive language and provides clarity around all reasonable adjustments (such as physical access, interpreted, captioned and relaxed performances).
- Working in partnership with local partners and other organisations to ensure that our productions and activities are relevant and useful to the widest range of local people.
- Disseminating information about our programmes as widely as possible.

The intention is that no-one shall be excluded from accessing and / or benefiting from the work of Half a String on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, nationality, culture and class.

Imagery and Language

Half a String recognises the importance of the use of imagery and language in its paper and web-based publications. It aims to represent the rich diversity of theatre and offer the possibility for the widest possible range of people to identify with the organisation and its activities. In practice this means:

- Checking text for clarity, simplicity and ease of comprehension
- Ensuring that examples are diverse and sensitive to cultural differences
- Seeking to promote positive and inclusive perceptions of cultural, gender and disability diversity
- Challenging discrimination where it exists in the infrastructure of support for access and progression in theatre

The intention is that no-one should feel excluded from the activities of Half a String through imagery or language that is exclusive or discriminatory.

Implementation and Monitoring

1. All employees of Half a String hold a responsibility to understand and implement the policy at a level and in a manner appropriate to their work.
2. This policy and related plans/targets will be reviewed annually through the business planning process.

Consultation and review

The policy will be formally reviewed every two years, unless legislation or other proposed changes have amended it in the meantime. At each review, consultation with participants will be part of the process.